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ABSTRACT

A checklist of bibliographies available from the Reference Department of the Indiana State University Library was mailed to each member of the faculty and administrative staff in an effort to improve communications. The list included bibliographies which has been compiled by the library staff within the past five years. Two hundred persons (out of 965 faculty and administrators) responded, and 2,224 copies of bibliographies were requested. Statistics gathered were helpful in providing the Reference Department with information regarding the interest in bibliographies shown by various administrative units and the subject areas which were of greatest interest. There were also requests for additional or expanded bibliographies as a result of the checklist mailing. A copy of the checklist is included. (Author/JAB)

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Bibliographies By Campus Mail

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IR005 440

Abstract

A checklist of bibliographies available from the Reference Department of the Indiana State University Library was mailed to each member of the faculty and administrative staff in an effort to improve communications. A significant number responded, including a high percentage of requests for bibliographies outside the area of expertise of the requestors.

Several recent articles have called attention to the importance of making faculty aware of academic library reference services. In his study, Jerold Nelson concluded that "...the average faculty member who responded to the questionnaire was aware of only 50 percent of the reference services available to him from his college library."[1] Benjamin Beede and Sandra Sadow emphasized the importance of developing various ways of communicating with faculty and students.[2] Verna Melum Beardsley stresses the need for service to the faculty, noting their ability to motivate students.[3]

In an effort to make faculty and students aware of library resources, the Reference Department at the Indiana State University Library has compiled a variety of selected bibliographies and "pathfinders" during the past several years. Reference librarians are assigned to compile bibliographies requested by individual faculty members, and periodically they compile bibliographies and "pathfinders" on topics of current interest such as the energy crisis, abortion, and death. The Reference Department forwards completed copies of the bibliography to the faculty member who requested that it be compiled, and occasionally copies are sent to other faculty members known to have an interest in the topic. In addition, copies of bibliographies are made available to individual students and faculty at the Reference Desk.

Recently a faculty member who obtained several bibliographies of interest to him suggested that other faculty members might

find them useful if they knew of their existence. After some thought and discussion, the idea of a checklist of bibliographies seemed like one of the best ways to implement the suggestion.

The idea of a checklist of materials available from an institution is not new. The United States Superintendent of Documents has used this technique through his selected lists for the past several years to advertise publications.[4] Various state agencies also have used checklists to publicize their published materials. With restrictive budgets today, an inexpensive checklist tends to be appealing.

Surprisingly, Library Literature records little evidence of checklists being used by libraries during the past ten years. The books by mail program used by several public libraries was one of the few services which resembled the checklist approach. Choong H. Kim's recent book describes and reviews present books by mail programs, and it serves as a guide for libraries wishing to implement such a program.[5]

Implementing the Idea

After a decision was made to use a checklist to publicize bibliographies, several details needed to be completed. A brief listing was made of each bibliography which had been compiled within the past five years. Each title was checked against the file of mimeograph stencils to be certain that one was available in case the demand necessitated making additional copies.

The completed checklist of forty-five bibliographies is shown in Figure 1.

The next step was to obtain a mailing list of faculty members. The University issues a directory of faculty and administrative staff members, but using this directory would require typing, or writing, individual names and addresses for each person. In an attempt to expedite the mailing list, a request was made to the University Business Office for a computerized printout of self-adhesive mailing labels listing faculty and administrative staff. The request was approved, and the only expense to the Library was $5.75 for labels. The labels were printed and sent back to the Library within one week.

To avoid using campus mail envelopes, student assistants were instructed to fold the 8½" x 11" checklist in thirds and to tape it closed with a small piece of scotch tape. The mailing labels were transferred to the folded checklists, and checklists were arranged by departmental, or area, number to assist the campus mail service. Checklists were mailed on a staggered basis to a few departments each day over a period of approximately one week to prevent the return of most requests for bibliographies on the same day. This procedure allowed the Reference Department to forward bibliographies on the same day which the request was received.

When the checklists were returned to the Library, the bibliographies requested were gathered by the departmental

secretary, or a student assistant, who forwarded them to the faculty member, or administrator, in a campus mail envelope. A card was placed in each envelope, as indicated in Figure 2, noting that the bibliographies were from the Reference Department of the Library. In cases where numerous copies were requested, more than one envelope had to be addressed to the patron. The requestor's name and departmental, or area, number was attached to each checklist returned to the Library which simplified addressing the campus mail envelopes.

Results

Two-hundred persons from seventy-two administrative units, or 20.7% of the nine-hundred sixty-five faculty and administrators responded, requesting 2224 copies of the bibliographies. By comparison, Choong H. Kim's recent book indicates in a descriptive table that the response rate of twenty public libraries surveyed which made bulk mailings of books by mail catalogs ranged from 3.61% to 15.9% and that the median response was 5.72%. In addition, he notes that general bulk mailers get a much lower response of approximately 2%.[6]

Statistics gathered were helpful in providing the Reference Department with information regarding the interest by various administrative units in bibliographies and the subject areas which seemed to be of interest to the largest number of faculty and administrators responding. Table 1 shows that twelve administrative units had five or more members requesting bibliographies.

Sixteen bibliographies received twenty-five or more individual requests as noted in Table 2. Table 3 lists nineteen bibliographies for which fifty copies or more were requested. Thirteen bibliographies were included in both Tables 2 and 3.

In addition, some unexpected feedback occurred. Several faculty members made a special effort to comment on the usefulness of the checklist, and some brought the checklists to the Library to pick up the bibliographies personally. One administrative unit requested additional copies of the checklist to distribute to students. A few faculty members requested that new bibliographies be compiled in their areas of interest, and one person asked that one of the bibliographies on the list be updated and expanded.

It became obvious from requests that faculty and administrators were requesting bibliographies from outside their area of expertise as well as from within it. A sample check of ninety-seven request forms indicated that 58% of the 485 requests for specific bibliographies were for those in subject areas not directly related to the discipline of the person requesting them. The bibliographies by mail checklist had made them aware of all available bibliographies which were issued by the Reference Department of the Library, and the results were gratifying.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the data and information gathered. The checklist helped to provide an improved means

of communication between the Reference Department of the Library and the faculty/administrators regarding bibliographies available from the Library. At the same time, it helped to give the Reference Department an idea of which administrative units found the bibliographies on the list useful. Information was gathered from the requests to help determine which bibliographies may need early revision due to the interest shown in them. It should be noted that some bibliographies which received only a few requests from faculty and administrators have been useful for students at the Reference Desk. Consequently, making the checklist available to students in the Library, and elsewhere on campus, appears to be a worthwhile goal. Due to the success of the checklist, the Reference Department plans to continue issuing a revised one periodically in the future.

References

[1]Jerold Nelson, "Faculty Awareness and Attitudes Toward Academic Library Reference Services: A Measure of Communication," College & Research Libraries 34(September 1973): 263-275.

[2]Benjamin Beede and Sandra Sadow, "Reference Service: From Zero To Total Commitment," RQ 13(Winter 1973): 147-148.

[3]Verna Melum Beardsley, "Library Instruction in Colleges and Universities in the Seventies: A Viewpoint," in John Lubans, Jr., ed., Educating the Library User (New York: Bowker, 1974), p. 111-114.

[4]U. S. Superintendent of Documents, Selected United States Government Publications (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1928-date).

[5]Choong H. Kim, Books By Mail: A Handbook For Libraries (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, c1977).

[6]Ibid., p. 43-44.

Norman

CUNNINGHAM MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Indiana State University

To: Faculty and Administration Date: April, 1977

From: Gene Norman, Head
Reference Department Subject: BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Noted below are topics of bibliographies recently compiled by the Reference Department of the Library. We have additional copies of each bibliography, and we would be glad to forward copies to you if you indicate the number needed to the left of each topic and return this sheet to me with your name label attached.

____Abortion (1975)
____Jane Austen (1975)

____Birth Control (1975)
____Blind Materials (1977)
____Business Research (1974)

____Career Information (1976)
____Children's Theater (1976)
____Collective Bargaining in Education (1976)
____Communications (1976)
____Consumer Education (1973)
____Creative Literature (1975)
____Criminology (1974)

____Death: Medical and Legal Aspects (1977)

____Early Childhood Education (1974)
____Educational Research (1976)
____Energy Crisis (1975)
____Energy Sources of the Future (1976)
____Environment (1974)

____Full Employment (1975)

____Grant Research (1976)

____Home Management (1973)
____Human Relations in Education Administration (1976)

____Indians of North America (1972)
____Industrial Relations (1975)
____Informal Drama with Children (1976)

____Journalism (1974)
____Junior High School and Middle School 1965-1974 (1974)

____Mental Hygiene (1974)
____Moving Pictures (1976)
____Music (1975)

____Newspaper Holdings (1976)
____Nursing Literature (1974)

____Ourdoor Education (1974)

____Painting and Sculpture Since 1945 (1974)
____Photography (1974)

____Reference Books (1975)

____Safety (1975)
____School Law (1977)
____Secondary School Administration (1974)
____Secretarial Materials in the Library (1972)
____Shakespeare (1976)
____Shakespeare on Record (1976)

____Traffic and Transportation Safety (1977)

____U. S. History (1975)
____Urban-Regional Studies (1975)

Figure 1. Checklist of Bibliographies.

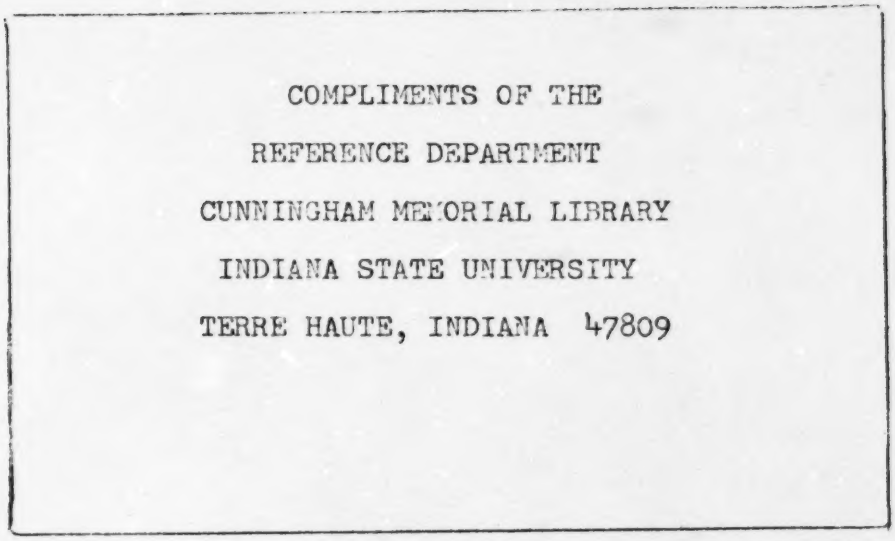

Figure 2. Card enclosed with bibliographies sent to faculty and administrators.

TABLE 1

ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS WITH FIVE OR MORE MEMBERS REQUESTING BIBLIOGRAPHIES*

NUMBER OF PERSONS REQUESTING BIBLIOGRAPHIES	ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT
13	English and Journalism Department
12	Graduate Education Department
12	Sociology and Social Work Department
11	Laboratory School
9	Music Department
8	School of Nursing
8	Secondary Education Department
6	Management-Finance Department
6	Speech Department
5	Elementary Education Department
5	Home Economics Department
5	Psychology Department

*This represents the largest number of requests per administrative unit only. Several units not listed above had a higher percentage of their members making requests.

TABLE 2

BIBLIOGRAPHIES RECEIVING TWENTY-FIVE OR MORE INDIVIDUAL REQUESTS

NUMBER OF REQUESTS	TOPIC
68	Grant Research*
51	Career Information*
49	Educational Research*
46	Communications*
45	Reference Books*
37	Energy Sources of the Future*
37	Environment*
31	Abortion*
30	Photography*
30	Birth Control*
30	Human Relations in Education Administration
30	Energy Crisis*
28	Death
27	Mental Hygiene*
27	School Law
25	Junior High School and Middle School*

*Bibliographies listed in both Tables 2 and 3

TABLE 3

BIBLIOGRAPHIES FOR WHICH FIFTY COPIES OR MORE WERE REQUESTED

NUMBER OF COPIES	TOPIC
174	Career Information*
135	Communications*
105	Reference Books*
94	Grant Research*
91	Educational Research*
83	Mental Hygiene*
78	Junior High School and Middle School*
78	Birth Control*
78	Abortion*
75	Photography*
74	Full Employment
72	Energy Sources of the Future*
65	Music
63	Early Childhood Education
59	Energy Crisis*
58	Environment*
53	Moving Pictures
51	Consumer Education
51	Informal Drama With Children

*Bibliographies listed in both Tables 2 and 3